

ANNOUNCER: And now racing to the podium, Ward Burton.

MR. BURTON: Good morning. I'm going to start by telling a story. In February 2002, I won the Daytona 500. It was an emotional day and I was honored to be part of one of history's greatest historical events. Following the win, I was rushed to New York City with all the camera, lights and media. As the days and events passed, my mind kept wandering back to a little place in the woods that I call the Cove in rural Virginia. I have two passions; racing and the outdoors.

As a child I was brought up in rural southern Virginia in Halifax County and I was lucky enough to spend time in the outdoors. I convinced my parents as a very young child, to let me go out to this cove and spend time in the woods without running water, electricity and modern conveniences. I thrived in the natural outdoors. With the recognition that came from the racing career, I was able to use this influence to help with conversation, my real passion.

Although racing cars is exciting and I'm passionate about the sport, what we're doing here today is much more important than a career. Conservation is not an event, it's a lifetime commitment. I want to thank President Bush and the leadership team for inviting me to speak to you today. This is obviously a historical event. Over the last two days, I've observed that we all believe that it's our responsibility to take care of our natural resources. One great way to pass along our natural resources is through the hunting and fishing culture.

We need to instill passion and love for the outdoors, for the citizens and for the children of this great country the same way my granddad did for me. He and others taught me the value of proper stewardship and the role we can play in making a difference for natural resources. They took me hunting, they took me fishing, they took me to the forest. They spent time with me as a young boy and I spent quality time with my children now. This passion for the outdoors and these activities in the outdoors makes you committed to this kind of cause. We need to set the right example for future generations and communicate in innovative ways to these children and to private landowners.

Partnership means shared responsibility. This conference has shown all of us that we can create partnerships, programs and incentives that will reach the next generation. Agriculture is a dying commodity and there are many distractions children have today that we must

figure out ways to reach them and one of the great ways we can reach them is through the new technology in media. Our children have nature deficit disorder. They do not have the emotional ties.

Thank you. They don't have the emotional tie that got us here today. They are disassociated with hunting and fishing and all the things that we're emotional about and I'm trying not to get emotional because this means a lot and I appreciate all of you all being passionate too, because we can make a difference. America has become sedentary and what I mean by that, our children today have more ADD, ADHD, depression, obesity is on the rise. America's culture is focused on expiration, getting kids in the outdoors is being lost.

The message we send directly to our children is directing them away from Mother Nature. And we need to create leaderships and natural resources and so that they are the stewards for the future. These children have more distractions than we had growing up and they're not in tune with the great outdoors. If we don't reach this next generation coming up about what brought us here today, then we're not going to have the leadership in conservation efforts and these partnerships being developed during this conference are going to be lost.

Ladies and gentlemen, if we lose our sportsmen, hunters and fishermen we're going to lose this fight. Through this conference, we've identified educational tools that are needed to encourage teachers, students and utilize the conservation curriculum to encourage children to get in the outdoors and learn about science, technology, engineering and math. These educational tools can be used to get children to learn about the exciting, eye-opening, confidence-building opportunity that only our great outdoors offers. Many of the case studies presented on Monday taught us urban conservation efforts. These are just the tip of the iceberg. The real people that we need to teach conservation to are the inner-city youth that do not have the opportunity that children do in the rural cultures where they are able to utilize, through their grandparents, uncles, older brothers, the hunting and fishing and conservation message.

Together we have the capability of making a difference in these children's lives so that they can carry the torch and conservation partnership. Children may not be our landowners today but they are the future for the rural culture and the rural culture is changing quickly and the family farms are becoming harder to keep in the family.

Let's talk about grassroots efforts for a moment. The landscape obviously, is changing quickly and is becoming fragmented. There's a growing number of small land size landowners and we've got to figure out ways to reach them. We learned here in St. Louis that there was a need for awareness and communication to these landowners about the programs and assistance available to them from the federal, state and local levels. There are media vehicles other than print that should target landowners and can explain things in a visually exciting way. We must use technology in new ways to meet these private landowners.

Future generation and modern landowners relate to multi-media and technology. We need to change our traditional extension models and incorporate new methods of reaching these landowners in this country. Federal and state agencies need to target their marketing to the local level and younger generations before we lose several generations of conservationists. This will aid in the ability for the fathers and mothers who are the landowners to leave a legacy for their children for proper stewardship.

It is obvious that all of you gathered here today are some of the most passionate people about conservation and you are the conservation leaders in this country. My foundation and many others have benefitted from your efforts and I'd like to thank each and every one of you. My family, the landowners and the conservationists in this country are depending on us to make a difference.

In closing, I want to leave you a quote, Theodore Roosevelt appointed Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes in 1902. "Life is passion in action. And each man must take a part of the passion and the action in his time" -- excuse me. "Each man must take part in the passion and the action in his times in peril of being judged never to have lived". Let's make a difference. Thanks.